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# Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
SP-02 PM-03 IO-06 EUR-08 MC-01 IGA-01 L-01 /053 W
---------- 110442 /43
R 131300Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4120
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMCONSUL BELIZE
USUN NEW YORK 508
USCINCSO
SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 GUATEMALA 8298

LIMDIS NOFORN

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BH, UK, GT
SUBJ: PRESIDENT LAUGERUD ON US-GUATEMALAN RELATIONS

REF: GUATEMALA 8229 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LAUGERUD USED HIS MEETING DEC 10
WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS AND ME TO PUT IN CONTEXT FOR
US THE WIDESPREAD RESENTMENT HE SAYS IS FELT AMONG HIS PEOPLE,
PARTICULARLY AMONG THE MILITARY, OVER OUR BEHAVIOR TOWARD GUATEMALA
IN RECENT YEARS. HE PICTURED THIS MISTRUST AS GROWING ESSENTIALLY
OUT OF

OUR POSTURE ON BELIZE, AND RECITED A LONG LITANY OF OUR
ALLEGED FAILURES TO BE HELPFUL IN THE MILITARY SUPPLY FIELD. EX-
PRESSING HIS CONCERN OVER A MOVE AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES HERE
TO BREAK OFF THE BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS AS A RESULT OF BRITISH FAILURE
TO ABIDE BY THEIR ALLEGED COMMITMENT NOT TO RAISE BELIZE IN
THE CURRENT UNGA, HE SAID HE WOULD TRY TO FORESTALL SUCH ACTION.
AS USUAL, HE CITED CUBA AS AN UNDERLYING CONCERN FOR GUATEMALA,
BOTH IN THE BELIZE ISSUE AND WITH REGARD TO GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES
IN GUATEMALA. END SUMMARY.

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2. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD RECEIVED DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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LUERS AND ME FOR AN HOUR AND FIFTEEN-MINUTE CONVERSATION
DEC 10 WHICH WAS LARGELY TAKEN UP BY THE PRESIDENT'S
EXPOSE OF DIFFICULTIES HE SAID HE WAS HAVING IN COUNTERING THE
APPREHENSIONS OF MANY OF HIS PEOPLE, PRIMARILY IN THE MILITARY,
WHO FELT THAT THE U.S. HAD FAILED GUATEMALA IN RECENT YEARS AND
PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH BELIZE. I HAD BEGUN THE CON-
VERSATION BY TELLING PRESIDENT I HAD NO SPECIFIC ISSUES TO RAISE
WITH HIM BUT WOULD APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR ANY PREOCCU-
PATIONS HE MIGHT HAVE IN CONSIDERING HIS RELATIONS WITH US.
HE SAID HE WOULD SPEAK FRANKLY AND WOULD TELL US ABOUT THE
WIDESPREAD FEELING AMONG HIS MILITARY OFFICERS, MANY OF WHOM
IRONICALLY HAD RECEIVED THEIR TRAINING IN THE U.S., AS WELL AS
AMONG OTHERS WHO HAD COME TO REGARD US WITH MISTRUST AND
WHO FELT WE COULD NO LONGER BE RELIED UPON. THERE WERE ALWAYS
PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO BUILD UP ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE U.S. AND
GUATEMALA AND, ALTHOUGH HE KNEW THEY WERE WRONG, HE HAD TO
DEAL WITH THE RESULTS OF THEIR EFFORTS. UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID,
THERE HAD BEEN A SERIES OF ACTIONS AND INACTIONS BY THE U.S.
IN THE MATTER OF PROVIDING MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH FED THE
PROPAGANDA BEING USED AGAINST US. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE
IN CONNECTION WITH THE BELIZE ISSUE. HE RECITED SEVERAL
INSTANCES, GOING BACK AS FAR AS THE EARLY SEVENTIES, OF ALLEGED
U.S. REFUSAL TO SELL C-47 AIRCRAFT TO GUATEMALA, THE PROTRACTED
DELAY IN REACHING A DECISION TO SELL M-16 RIFLES, INABILITY TO
OBTAIN AN A-37 FIGHTER, IMCOMPREHENSIBLE SLOW-DOWNS IN THE DE-
LIVERY OF MINOR TYPES OF EQUIPMENT, INABILITY TO OBTAIN SPARE
PARTS, AND THE EARLY 1975 REFUSAL TO APPROVE THE RESALE TO
A PRIVATE AMERICAN OF TWO T-33 TRAINERS WHICH GUATEMALA HAD OB-
TAINED EARLIER FROM THE U.S. HE SAID THAT AMBASSADOR MELOY HAD
ONCE BEEN VERY FRANK WITH HIM AND TOLD HIM THAT WE DID NOT WISH
TO BE IN THE POSITION OF SUPPLYING MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH MIGHT
BE USED TO KILL BRITISH SOLDIERS. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS
BUT, NEVERTHELESS, THE WHOLE HISTORY OF OUR ATTITUDE ON MILITARY
EQUIPMENT HAD RESULTED IN A BUILD-UP OF SUSPICION AND MISTRUST
AMONG MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES. MANY OF THEM FELT, HE SAID, THAT
SINCE GUATEMALA WAS SO CLOSE TO THE U.S. AND WAS WITHING ITS SPHERE
OF INFLUENCE, WE SHOULD BE MORE HELPFUL THAN WE HAD BEEN.
BOSTER

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ACTION ARA-06

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R 131300Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4121
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMCONSUL BELIZE
USUN NEW YORK 509
USCINCSO
SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 GUATEMALA 8298

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3. I SAID I APPRECIATED THE CANDOR WITH WHICH HE HAD SPOKEN. I SAID I HAD BEEN AWARE OF THIS STRAIN IN OUR RELATIONSHIP AND THAT VICE PRESIDENT SANDOVAL HAD BEEN QUITE FRANK WITH ME ABOUT SOME OF THESE IDEAS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GUATEMALA. I SAID I HOPED HE WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT WE SAW THE BELIZE QUESTION AS A DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO OF OUR VERY GOOD FRIENDS. IT WAS A DISPUTE IN WHICH IN THE PAST WE HAD TRIED TO BE HELPFUL BUT THAT OUR EFFORTS HAD NOT PROVED SUCCESSFUL. NOW WE FELT THAT THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED SHOULD REACH AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES, ALTHOUGH WE DID WHAT WE COULD TO URGE EACH OF THE PARTIES TO FIND A REASONABLE AND PEACEFUL ACCOMMODATION. BUT I WANTED TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE ATTITUDE DID NOT REFLECT ANY LACK OF FRIENDSHIP FOR GUATEMALA. ON THE CONTRARY, WE WISHED TO HAVE THE FRIENDLIEST RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE, HIS GOVERNMENT, AND WITH HIM PERSONALLY. I SAID I WOULD NOT COMMENT ON ALL THE INSTANCES HE HAD RECITED OF DIFFICULTIES IN THE MILITARY SUPPLY FIELD AS MANY OF THEM HAD APPARENTLY OCCURRED SEVERAL YEARS AGO. AS AMBASSADOR MELOY HAD MENTIONED TO HIM, THERE MIGHT BE SITUATIONS WHERE WE WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT MILITARY DELIVERIES. I WOULD, NEVERTHELESS, LOOK INTO THE CURRENT SITUATION TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY MIS-UNDERSTANDINGS THAT COULD BE CLEARED UP. BUT WHAT, I ASKED, COULD HE TELL US ABOUT THE OUTLOOK FOR THE CURRENT ROUND OF TALKS
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WITH THE BRITISH ON BELIZE?

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THESE TALKS, AND WHAT HE FELT WAS THE BRITISH FAILURE TO KEEP THEIR WORD TO FOREGO ACTION IN THE UN WHILE THE TALKS WERE GOING ON. HE SAID THAT THE BRITISH HAD ASSURED FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA DURING THE RECENT TALKS THAT, WITH THE TALKS IN PROGRESS, THEY WOULD NOT RAISE THE ISSUE IN THE UN THIS YEAR AS HAD BEEN THE CASE THE YEAR BEFORE. DESPITE THIS UNDERSTANDING, THE MATTER HAD BEEN RAISED AGAIN AND A NEW RESOLUTION PASSED. THIS HAD CREATED A FUROR AMONG THE MEM-

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BERS OF THE GUATEMALAN DELEGATION, FOUR MEMBERS OF WHICH
WERE FROM THE FOUR PRINICIPAL PARTIES OF GUATEMALA. THESE
REPRESENTATIVES HAD NOW SENT WORD THAT THEY WOULD INTRODUCE
A MOTION IN THE CONGRESS DEMANDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT
BREAK OFF THE TALKS WITH THE BRITISH IN VIEW OF THE ACTION IN
THE UN. FOR THEM TO DO THIS WOULD PLACE HIM, AS PRESIDENT,
IN AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION BEFORE THE COUNTRY.

5. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A MOST SERIOUS MISTAKE.
I SAID WE HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT THE TALKS HAD BEEN PROCEEDING
WELL AND THAT FOR GUATEMALA TO BREAK OFF THE NEGOTIATIONS
BECAUSE OF ACTIONS OUTSIDE OF THE TALKS THEMSELVES WOULD
BE MOST UNFORTUNATE AND WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD. THE
PRESIDENT SAID HE COMPLETELY AGREED BUT THAT THE SITUATION
NEVERTHELESS WAS VERY DIFFICULT. I SAID THAT SURELY THE
MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATIONS WISING TO TAKE THIS ACTION
COULD BE EDUCATED ABOUT THE HAM SUCH ACTION COULD HAVE.
THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT FORTUNATELY THE CONGRESS WOULD
RECESS AT THE END OF NEXT WEEK AND NOT RESUME UNTIL JANUARY.
THIS WOULD GIVE HIM A THREE-WEEK BREATHER AND HE WOULD TRY
HIS BEST DURING THAT PERIOD TO HEAD OFF THIS IDEA.

6. AT THIS POINT LUERS ASKED THE PRESIDENT WHETHER HIS
GOVERNMENT HAD EXPRESSED ITS DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE UK OVER
THIS SUPPOSED BREACH OF FAITH ABOUT THE UN RESOLUTION. LUERS SAID
HE HAD BEEN AT THE UNGA PRIOR TO THE PASSAGE OF THE RESOLUTION
ON BELIZE AND SENSED THAT THE UK WAS NOT PRESSING FOR A
STRONG RESOLUTION. IT HAD BEEN THE CARIBBEAN NATIONS WORKING
WITH RESPRESENTATIVES OF BELIZE. THE PRESIDENT SIAD
THE GOG HAD INDEED EXPRESSED ITS UNHAPPINESS TO THE UK.
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7. THE PRESIDENT WENT ON TO SAY THAT ANOTHER PREOCCUPATION
STRONGLY FELT IN GUATEMALA WAS CONCERN ABOUT CUBAN ENTREE
INTO BELIZE. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT GUATEMALA COULD NOT
RECOVER ALL BELIZEAN TERRITORY; IT WAS TOO LATE FOR THAT ALTHOUGH
THERE WAS MUCH CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT UBICO FOR HAVING FAILED
TO OCCUPY BELIZE DURING WORLD WAR II WHEN THE BRITISH WERE
TOO HEAVILY ENGAGED ELSEWHERE TO HAVE COUNTERED SUCH A MOVE.
THE PRESIDENT HASTENED TO DISOWN THIS IDEA, NOTING THAT IT
WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN THE GUATEMALAN CHARACTER. HOWEVER,
HE SAID GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE TO HAVE THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF
BELIZE, REFERRING TO THE DISTRICT OF TOLEDO. IF BRITAIN AND
GUATEMALA COULD WORK THIS OUT, THE CUBAN PROBLEM COULD BE
AVOIDED. BUT IF THIS FAILED, THEY HAD TO WORRY
ABOUT CUBAN INTENTIONS SINCE CUBA'S PRINCIPAL EXPORT WAS
GUERRILLAS, AS IN ANGOLA. HE ALSO NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION
REPORTS THAT BELIZE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHOMAN HAD VISITED CUBA.
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R 131300Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4122
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMCONSUL BELIZE
USCINCSO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 GUATEMALA 8298

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8. THIS LED THE PRESIDENT TO REFER TO CUBAN EFFORTS TO CREATE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES IN GUATEMALA. HE REFERRED TO THE RECENT EGP TAKE-OVER OF THE SHENANDOAH OIL CAMP AND SAID THEY HAD ESTABLISHED THE PRESENCE OF AT LEAST ONE CUBAN IN THE EGP GROUP. QUERIED ABOUT THE BASIS FOR HIS CERTAINTY ABOUT THIS, HE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN ONE MEMBER OF THE GROUP WHO HAD WORN A GREEN BERET WITH A RED STAR AND WHO, AS A MEMBER OF A THREE-MAN TEAM OF INTERROGATORS OF THEIR CAPTURED HELICOPTER PILOTS, HAD REMAINED SILENT DURING THE INTERROGATION, BUT WHO AT ONE POINT HAD SHOUTED AN OBSECENE EXPRESSION WHICH WAS UNIQUE TO THE CUBAN VERNACULAR. (IN FACT, THE QUOTED EXPRESSION IS ALSO HEARD IN OTHER CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES.)

9. RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF THE ATMOSPHER OF MISTRUST BETWEEN THE U.S. AND GUATEMALA, HE SAID THAT SMALL GESTURES WERE IMPORTANT. IN THIS CONNECTION HE WANTED TO MENTION THAT HIS MILITARY ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON WAS TO HAVE SIGNED AN ORDER TODAY OPENING BIDS FOR THE REPAIR OF THREE HUEY HELICOPTERS. IF ACTION ON THIS REQUREST WERE TAKEN EXPE-DITIOUSLY, THIS WOULD BE CONSIDERED HELPFUL; AND HE RECALLED THE LIGHTNING SPEED WITH WHICH WE HAD RESPONDED TO CERTAIN REQUESTS JUST AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. IF, HOWEVER, WEEKS WENT BY BEFORE THE AIRCRAFT ARRIVED TO PICK UP THESE HELICOPTERS,

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THIS WOULD NOT BE GOOD. IS SAID THAT MR. LUERS AND I WERE GLAD TO KNOW ABOUT THIS AND WE WOULD DO WHAT WE COULD TO ENSURE QUICK ACTION.

10. BUT I SAID THIS LED ME, IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF CANDOR IN WHICH HE HAD SPOKEN, TO ASK HIM TO EXPLAIN ONE THING WHICH PUZZLED ME. I SAID HE HAD RECALLED ANUMBER OF CASES GOING BACK SOME TIME IN THE PAST INWHICH WE HAD APPEARED NOT TO BE AS FORTHCOMING AND HELPFUL AS THEY HAD WISHED, BUT THAT HE HAD NOW MENTIONED ILLUSTRATIONS OF OUR IMMEDIATE ACTIONS IN HELPING HEM AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. SINCE THIS EVIDENCE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP WAS VERY RECENT, WHY WAS THIS NOT THE DOMINANT IMPRESSION IN THE CIRCLES HE REFERRED TO RATHER THAN THE OLDER HISTORY HE HAD CITED? THE PRESIDENT SAID THE TROUBLE WAS THAT PEOPLE'S MEMORIES WERE SHORT AND THAT, WHILE EVERYONE HAD BEEN OVERWHELMINGLY GRATEFUL FOR OUR GENEROUS ASSISTANCE AFTER THE EARTHQAUKE, THIS DISASTER WAS NOW BEGINNING TO RECEDE IN EVERYBODY'S MIND WHILE THE BELIZE ISSUE CONTINUED TO BE A CURRENT ISSUE.

11. COMMENTING ON THE PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE BELIZE ISSUE, LUERS REMINDED HIM THAT THE FIRST AMERICAN INVOCATION OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE HAD BEEN BY PRESIDENT CLEVELAND IN THE CASE OF BRITISH GUYANA, AN ACTION WHICH, DESPITE OUR IN-TENTION TO BE HELPFUL, HAD FAILED TO WIN US ANYTHING BUT RE-SENTMENT FROM BRITAIN, VENEZUELA AND GUYANA. THE LESSION WHICH WE HAD TO TAKE FROM THIS WAS THAT, DESPITE OUR DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL TO OUR FRIENDS, WE WERE BETTER OFF NOT TRYING TO INTERVENE IN DISPUTES IN THE HEMISPHERE. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS REASONING.

12. DURING THE COURSE OF CONVERSATION, THE PRESIDENT TOLD US OF HIS DECISION TO SPEND THE FIRST YEAR AFTER THE END OF HIS TERM IN THE UNITED STATES, GOING INITIALLY TO GLASTONBURY, CONNECTICUT WHERE HIS FATHER-IN-LAW LIVED. HE SAID AFTER A COUPLE OF MONTHS THERE, THEY PLANNED TO BUY A MOBILE HOME AND SPEND THE REST OF THEIR TIME SEEING ALL OF THE FIFTY AMERICAN STATES. HE SAID NOT ONLY DID HE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW THE U.S. BUT HE ALSO FELT IT ESSENTIAL TO GET OUT OF GUATEMALA IN OVER TO AVOID BEING CONSTATNLY IMPORTUNED BY FRIENDS WHO WOULD WISH TO HAVE HIM INTERCEDE ON THEIR BEHALF WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

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13. COMMENT: WE HAVE BEEN KEENLY AWARE OF THE STRAINS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM THE BIASED VIEW ENTERTAINED BY SOME GUATEMALANS, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE MILITARY, OF OUR POSTURE IN THE BELIZE DISPUTE, BOTH OUR UN-WILLINGNESS TO TAKE GUATEMALA'S SIDE IN THE ISSUE AND ALSO THE ACTIONS WE HAVE TAKEN IN THE MILITARY SUPPLY FIELD AS A RESULT OF OUR CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE HOSTILITIES. THIS IS, NEVERTHEYLEES, THE CLEAREST EXPRESSION OF THE DEPTH OF FEELING ON THIS QUESTION AND THE PRESIDENT'S PREOCCUPATION WITH IT AS A POLITICAL PROBLEM WHICH HE SEES IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS OWN SUPPORTERS. MY EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH VICE PRESIDENT SANDOVAL IN WHICH HE BLUNTLY CASTIGATED US FOR OUR POSTURE IS PRECISELY TO THE POINT. BECAUSE OF THIS BACKGROUND, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO USE WHATEVER OPPORTUNITIES WE HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE OUR FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD GUATEMALA, AS WE DID AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. THE PRESIDENT WAS OBVIOUSLY SIGNALLING JUST SUCH A TOKEN OPPORTUNITY TO US IN THE CASE OF THE HELICOPTER REPAIR BIDS AND WE URGE THAT A SPECIAL EFFORT BE MADE TO MEET THIS REQUEST AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE, A GESTURE WHICH PRESIDENT WILL TAKE AS PERSONALLY REASSURING.

14. AS FOR THE THREAT OF A BREAK-OFF IN THE BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS, WE BELIEVE IT IS WELL WITHIN THE PRESIDENT'S POWER TO PREVENT SUCH ACTION BY THE CONGRESS AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT HE WILL IN FACT PREVAIL OVER THE HARD-LINERS ON THIS ISSUE.
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**To:** STATE
**Type:** TE
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006